6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
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not now possible for field work to supply the gaps in the written material.[72]

The traditional kinship system had neither clans nor segmenting lineages. The patrilineal group (*oluse*) was localized in a village, the group head being at the same time a village headman. Patrilineal ties do not seem to have been recognized between villages.[73] This social independence of the agnatically united village was reflected in the surrounding palisade, in the close clustering of the houses (nowadays much more spread out) and in the village institutions of the dancing-floor and the men's house (*ondjango*). It was here that all the men and boys, from seven or eight up, ate. Hastings writes, 'Each woman, after preparing the meal, takes or sends the portion which is for the male members of her family. This food is common property. As soon as enough has arrived some responsible member among the men will have it divided among the boys. For days a man may never taste of the food which is prepared by his wife.'[74] The men's house was also a club, and a court-room, where minor cases were decided. It was through this localized body of patrikin that an individual claimed land and residence rights and through it that he participated in the political system.[75]

The matrilineal group (the *oluina*) was composed of the descendants of a common great-great-grandmother.[76] According to Childs, it had a head who might also at times be a village headman,[77] and it was presumably the matrilineal group head who settled the disputes over property which Hambly says

[72] For an attempt at reconstructing Umbundu kinship on the basis of Childs's book see J. A. Barnes's review of *Umbundu Kinship and Character* in *Man*, 1950, pp. 126–128. It may be mentioned that the terms 'the side of the bow' and 'the side of the basket' are used simply to mean 'patrilateral kin' and 'matrilateral kin' (Dr. Childs, private information, and my own inquiries).

[73] A rather ambiguous phrase in Childs p. 43 ('The *olusi* consists of a large number of local village groups'), which might be interpreted as meaning that villages were patrilineally grouped into clans, seems really to mean simply that the village is the *olusi* unit.

[74] Hastings, p. 77.

[75] Ibid., p. 16. Childs, pp. 43–44.

[76] Hastings, p. 83, states that the matrilineal group consists of the descendants of a common great-great-great-grandmother (that is, five generations), and on p. 91 says that it consists of a group 'linked by a common great-great-grandmother'.

[77] Childs, p. 44.